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TO: Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham c/o New Mexico Public Education Department,
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FROM: Paul Golding, PhD, President, Santa Fe Boys Educational Foundation,
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SUBJECT: **Written Input to the *Discussion Draft Action Plan*—General
Commentary on The Opportunity *Martinez/Yazzie* Boys Present to New Mexico**

Summary of Our Key Recommendations:

- Males in the *Martinez-Yazzie* groups are consistently, significantly, and systemically underperforming females in terms of graduation rates and reading proficiency rates, while performing equally in math. Within the context of the *Martinez/Yazzie* lawsuit, this signifies that boys are among the most underserved in the New Mexico public PreK-to-12 educational system. This needs to be acknowledged in the Discussion Draft Action Plan by including males as an explicit subgroup of the four groups of concern.
- The Draft Action Plan needs to reflect NM PED's understanding of the reasons behind the lower educational achievement levels of males in the *Martinez/Yazzie* subgroups. Related to this is the need by NM PED to incorporate the growing knowledge about differences between the sexes and different learning styles into its concept of the "whole child."
- NM PED needs to collect, share, and analyze data about the *Martinez/Yazzie* targeted groups, especially with regard to data about sex differences in educational performance in order to better attend to the *Martinez/Yazzie* injunctions.
- A focus on boys—within the context of the four groups targeted in the court's decision—provides a key **opportunity** for NM PED to make an impact in its *Martinez/Yazzie* rectification efforts. NM PED needs to avail itself of this **opportunity** if the state wishes to fulfill its ambitious targets for *Martinez/Yazzie* students.

1. Introduction

The Santa Fe Boys Educational Foundation would like to thank the NM Public Education Department for this opportunity to comment on the *Discussion Draft Action Plan: Decisions about Martinez/Yazzie v. State of New Mexico*.

In order to situate our input to the NM PED's request for comments, we note that the *Discussion Draft Action Plan* is a response to the injunctions of the *Martinez/Yazzie v. State of New Mexico* lawsuit. The latter found that the state had failed to provide the programs and services necessary for certain student groups to thrive. In ameliorating past violations of the New Mexico Constitution in the distribution of educational resources, the *Discussion Draft Action Plan* of the NM PED focuses on four specific groups of students: Native Americans, students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged. According to Judge Singleton and the *Discussion Draft Action Plan*, students in these groups constitute 70% of all public-school students in New Mexico.

With this comment, the Santa Fe Boys Educational Foundation posits that within these groups there are consistent, significant, and systemic sex differences in educational performance with males having been failed by the PreK-to-12 NM public education system to a greater extent than females, and so we recommend that the *Discussion Draft Action Plan* needs to include young males as an explicit subgroup of the four student groups of concern. We further recommend understanding the reasons behind the greater failure of males and propose some directions for solving this inequity.

2. Our Analysis and the Problem of the Lack of NM PED Data About Sex Differences for Martinez/Yazzie Groups

We base our findings and recommendations on analysis of the academic performance data used by NM PED to set goals for improving the educational outcomes of the *Martinez/Yazzie* four targeted groups. The Discussion Draft Action Plan cites 2018-2020 data showing the starting points for the graduation levels and 2019 data establishing the starting points for reading and math achievement targets. From these starting points, NM PED establishes targets for the years 2025 and 2026 for graduation and reading and math proficiency for the *Martinez/Yazzie* groups.

We preferred to use sex difference data in academic performance for each of the four *Martinez/Yazzie* target group categories, and we petitioned this data under the *NM Inspection of Public Records Act (IPRA)*. Our request was denied because NM PED had “no documents that appear to be responsive” to our request.¹ Therefore, we had to assume in appendix tables 1 and 2 that the Martinez/Yazzie groups performed in parallel with NM PED-reported sex differences for All Students category (for which NM PED does break out performance by sex), but with average rates of performance around the lower levels of each of the Martinez/Yazzie groups. Because the All Students category includes 30% additional New Mexico students whose academic performance is above the level of those in the *Martinez/Yazzie* groups, the All Students category perhaps only approximately reflects differences between boys and girls in the *Martinez/Yazzie*

¹ Letter dated June 10, 2022 (IPRA #22-141) from IPRA Custodian of Record of the NM PED.

target groups. For reasons described below, our approach likely underestimates male-female difference in the *Martinez/Yazzie* groups.

An example: looking at graduation rates in 2018 (appendix table 1), All Student average was 73.9% and the difference between males and females in All Students category was approximately 7%, males less than females. The average rate of graduation for students in the Economically Disadvantaged group—a *Martinez/Yazzie* group for which differentiation by sex is not available—was 69% in 2018. Applying the 7% difference between males and females from All Students to the 69% average of the *Martinez/Yazzie* Economically Disadvantaged group yields an average rate for male graduation of 65.5% and for females of 72.5% in 2018. These assumed rates are italicized in Appendix Tables 1 and 2. To justify this assumption, we note that the *Martinez/Yazzie* groups make up 70% of the All Students category and so the sex differences of the All Students category must approximately be reflected in the collective *Martinez/Yazzie* categories.

We acknowledge that using the All Students sex difference as a standard to apply to the *Martinez/Yazzie* groups is not the ideal way to proceed, but because NM PED denied our request for the more accurate data, we present this as the best option available to us. One problem is that it likely underestimates the male-female difference in the *Martinez/Yazzie* groups. We see some evidence for this in California where Department of Education data shows that Asian and White students have a narrower male-female difference than Hispanic, Native, and Black students in graduation rates as seen in Appendix Table 4. We believe the boys in all or most of the *Martinez/Yazzie* groups will show even poorer educational outcomes compared to girls than in our analysis in Appendix Tables 1 and 2 based on the All Students category.

- We recommend that NM PED develop and use sex difference data in formulating its Action Plan in order to more fully understand the *Martinez/Yazzie* groups.

3. Findings on High School Graduation Rates: Discussion Appendix Table 1

As background to the graduation rate data, we note that high school graduation rates in New Mexico have increased dramatically since the Richardson Administration—from 54% overall in 2008 to 77% overall in 2021. Many conclude that the standards for obtaining a high school diploma have been lowered. This concern was expressed in the *Martinez/Yazzie* decision by Judge Singleton who stated that almost 50% of NM college attendees need remedial courses in spite of having a high school diploma.² We maintain that the level of preparedness for college and career is considerably less for high school graduating boys than girls in New Mexico, so that the high school graduation data alone, showing boys in All Student category behind girls by an average of approximately 7%, likely fails to capture the much greater differences between boys and girls in terms of college and career readiness. Appendix Table 3 clarifies this point. Data on graduates from NM colleges and universities by sex show that in the 2018-2021 academic years, males in New Mexico were 16% to 20% less likely than females to earn Bachelor's Degrees and 28% to 34% less likely to earn Associate's Degrees—conveying a marked lack of readiness of male high school graduates compared to female high school graduates.

² *Yazzie and Martinez v. State of New Mexico: July 20, 2018 Decision and Order*, p. 42.

4. Findings on Achievement Levels in Reading and Math: Discussion Appendix Table 2

Male reading achievement is about 10% below that of females for All Students. We assume—absent data from NM PED to the contrary—that this difference is more or less repeated among all *Martinez/Yazzie* groups. On average 10 percent fewer boys reach proficiency in reading than girls. To the extent this assumption is correct, this leaves males in some of the *Martinez/Yazzie* groups with extremely low average reading proficiency levels. For example, on average only 20% of Native American boys are proficient in reading compared to 30% of Native American girls.

Math achievement levels show that boys and girls are the same, and because the math proficient rate for All Students in New Mexico is very low (20%), this means that girls and boys, in some *Martinez/Yazzie* groups, such as Students with Disabilities, have few math skills. It should be noted that almost two-thirds of students in this Students with Disabilities category are boys. According to the National Center for Education Statistics of the US Government, of the 14.5% of all US students classified as learning disabled in the 2020-2021 school year, 17.7% of males and 9.6% of females are in this category.³ This is probably because “essentially all neurodevelopmental disorders are more prevalent in boys than in girls” (McCarthy et al. 2017, p. 7).⁴ For example, autism spectrum disorders and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorders are two to four times more likely among boys.

5. NM PED’s “whole child”

In a related document, the NM PED’s *Comprehensive Strategic Plan*, the term, “whole child,” is mentioned throughout the text, 20 times in all. However, references to differences between boys and girls in education receive no mention in relation to the “whole child,” neither in the *Comprehensive Strategic Plan* nor in the *Discussion Draft Action Plan*. This is in spite of the fact that, while each child is unique, gender is one of the two main organizing principles of child development (along with age). For example, in cross cultural studies it has been widely observed that most boys and girls play differently.⁵ Most boys organize friendships into larger scale social networks and girls are more likely to engage in intimate dyadic friendships. At base, these differences are associated with the much greater exposure of boys to androgens like testosterone and with boys’ slower developmental timetable, among other factors.⁶ Many such differences are described by the *Zero to Three* organization, the country’s preeminent infant advocate and educator of new parents. Infant boys, on average, are more delayed in their sensory and cognitive development, and also they are less socially-attuned than girls, less likely to smile, and less capable with regard to fine motor and language skills. Boys are also less developed in other

³ US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2020-21). *Digest of Education Statistics* table 204.50. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_204.50.asp?current=yes.

⁴ McCarthy, M.M., De Vries, G.J., & Forger, N.G. (2017). Sexual Differentiation of the Brain: A Fresh Look at Mode, Mechanisms, and Meaning. D. W. Pfaff & M. Joëls (Eds.). *Hormones, Brain, and Behavior 3rd edition, Vol 5*, pp. 3-32. Oxford, UK: Academic Press.

⁵ Geary, D. C. (2021). *Male, female: The evolution of human sex differences (Third Edition)*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

⁶ Hooven, C. (2021). *T: The story of testosterone, the hormone that dominates and divides us*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company.

sensory areas: less responsive in auditory and eye contact, for example.⁷ Further, the World Health Organization notes, “Adolescent girls tend to reach biologically defined developmental milestones up to two years ahead of adolescent boys.”⁸ The point is that the development of boys and girls is somewhat different, a fact that affects their behavior as they enter school, including Pre-K, until they graduate from high school.

- We recommend that this accumulating knowledge outlined above about differences between male and female development be incorporated in NM PED’s concept of the “whole child” with the objective of ameliorating the *Martinez/Yazzie* inequities.

6. What Can NM PED Do to Address the Difficulties of Boys in the NM Educational System?

The answers must go beyond a simple list of pedagogical techniques that can be added into the classroom routine such as allowing more movement or descriptions of ways to help boys express themselves better. These would help; however, they are insufficient to overcome the deeper problems that boys face, especially in the *Martinez/Yazzie* categories of students. Rather, an investment on the part of the NM PED and school districts to understand why boys are so much less likely to fulfill their potential is required. This means:

- Understanding, accepting, and accommodating different learning styles based on the complex interaction among biological, psychological, and socially-constructed differences between most boys and most girls.
- Understanding and learning how to counter the effect of deficient early attachment experiences, which are more likely to affect boys in the *Martinez/Yazzie* groups because of the state’s many single-parent families—especially father-absent families—at a higher rate in New Mexico compared to 48 other states and among associated racial and ethnic groups, according to statistics from New Mexico Voices for Children *Kids Count Data Book* (2022).⁹
- Understanding that boys also need enrichment, extracurricular, and out-of-school-time programs related to their somewhat unique development. This might contribute to reducing the emphasis of programs for boys within the context of the juvenile justice system.

The Santa Fe Boys Educational Foundation has brought experts to the state in its effort to educate teachers and other school personnel about appreciating boy reality and translating it into the classroom. The response from educational authorities has been disappointing. On October 27,

⁷ For more from the Zero to Three organization on this subject: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1380-are-there-any-differences-in-the-development-of-boys-and-girls-brains>. Also:

UNM Center for Development and Disability: Infant Boys’ Longer Window of Vulnerability: https://santafeboys.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2020_Boys-Slower-Development_Paul-Golding-5.pdf. Also, Golding, P. & Fitzgerald, H. E. (2016). Trauma and boys, birth to 3: What’s different. *Zero to Three Journal*. <https://santafeboys.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2016-05-ZTTGolding.pdf>

⁸ World Health Organization. (2014). *Health for the world’s adolescents: A second chance in the second decade*. <http://apps.who.int/adolescent/second-decade/section2/page2/age-not-the-whole-story.html>

⁹ New Mexico Voices for Children. (2022). *2021 New Mexico Kids Count*. <https://www.nmvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/KidsCount-DataBook2021-FINAL.pdf>

2022, the Santa Fe Boys Educational Foundation will be virtually hosting Leonard Sax, an internationally acclaimed author of *Why Gender Matters*, *Boys Adrift*, and *The Collapse of Parenting* to speak on these subjects. This will be an opportunity for NM PED and schools to begin to catch up and contribute to narrowing the sex differences within the *Martinez/Yazzie* gaps.¹⁰

7. Conclusion

In closing, the Santa Fe Boys Educational Foundation would like to emphasize that there is nothing about a focus on boys' academic and social advancement that should undercut NM PED's concerns about respect for the social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of a diverse student body. Nor should anything we suggest interfere with the development of restorative approaches to student behavior. Indeed, it is our intent to enhance all these efforts while at the same time meeting the needs of the historically underserved as described in *Martinez/Yazzie*, explicitly recognizing that boys are among the most underserved of the underserved. Using likely underestimated data, as described above, we conclude that the differences between male and female academic performance within *Martinez/Yazzie* groups is greater than most of the differences between the average New Mexico student (the All Student Average) and the average *Martinez/Yazzie* group of students with regard to graduation and reading proficiency rates. Can NM PED address the injunctions of this lawsuit without addressing boys' educational needs more adequately? We don't think so.

¹⁰ For more about Dr. Sax: <https://www.leonardsax.com>. For more about Dr. Sax's presentation on October 27, 2022: <https://santafeboys.org/conferences/2022-about-the-conference/>.

Appendix Tables 1-3

Appendix Table 1. New Mexico High School Graduation Rates (percent), 4-year Cohort, by Population Group & by Sex, 2018, 2019, & 2020									
	2018			2019			2020		
	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female
All Students	73.9	70.6	77.2	75	71	79	76.9	73.3	80.7
Econ Disadvantaged	69	65.7	72.3	70	66	74	71.8	68.1	75.5
English Learners	71.1	67.8	74.4	73	69	77	75.8	72.1	79.5
Student w/ Disabilities	65.6	62.3	68.9	64	60	68	66.4	62.7	70.1
Native American	65.8	62.5	69.1	69	65	73	72.3	68.6	76.0
Source: NM PED. Numbers in <i>italics</i> are estimates derived from assumptions described in text.									

Appendix Table 2. Percent Achieving Level of Proficient in Math and Reading, by Population Group & by Sex, 2018 & 2019												
	2018						2019					
	Reading			Math			Reading			Math		
	All	Male	F'male	All	Male	F'male	All	Male	F'male	All	Male	F'male
All	39	33	44	21	21	21	34	29	39	20	21	20
Econ.Dis.	33	27.5	38.5	16	16	16	28	23	33	15	15.5	14.5
Eng.Learn	21	15.5	26.5	8	8	8	15	10	20	8	8.5	7.5
St.w/Dis	14	8.5	19.5	7	7	7	12	7	17	8	8.5	7.5
Nat.Am.	28	22.5	33.5	12	12	12	25	20	30	12	12.5	11.5
Source: NM PED. Numbers in <i>italics</i> are estimates derived from assumptions described in text.												

Appendix Table 3. Percent of Bachelor's and Associate's Degrees Earned at New Mexico Public Universities and Colleges By Sex, 2018-2019, 2019-2020, 2020-2021						
	2018-2019		2019-2020		2020-2021	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Bachelor's Degrees (Number)	42% (3,486)	58% (4,753)	40% (3,197)	60% (4,720)	40% (3,189)	60% (4,865)
Associate's Degrees (Number)	36% (3,436)	64% (6,016)	35% (3,117)	65% (5,794)	33% (2,676)	67% (5,496)
Source: NM Department of Higher Education						

Appendix Table 4¹¹

Table 1. California H.S. Graduation Rate Cohorts by Race/Ethnicity & Sex 2016-2020

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Race/Ethnicity & Gender Cohorts	# of Students in Cohort	Regular High School Diploma	Graduates Meeting UC/CSU Requirements	Graduates Earning a Seal of Biliteracy	Graduates Earning a Golden State Seal Merit Diploma
African American Females	58,136	80.2%	46.4%	3.5%	15.5%
African American Males	61,685	70.0%	32.9%	1.4%	8.5%
American Indian or Alaska Native Females	5,758	76.4%	35.6%	5.0%	15.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native Males	7,568	70.1%	29.0%	3.2%	12.0%
Asian Females	87,362	94.7%	79.6%	24.8%	53.8%
Asian Males	93,177	92.1%	71.2%	17.1%	45.5%
Filipino Females	27,628	94.8%	72.3%	10.1%	42.6%
Filipino Males	30,177	91.6%	60.7%	5.9%	33.0%
Hispanic/Latino Females	511,532	85.6%	49.5%	16.3%	19.6%
Hispanic/Latino Males	537,901	77.3%	36.4%	8.7%	13.5%
Pacific Islander Females	4,944	86.5%	47.7%	5.6%	20.1%
Pacific Islander Males	5,153	79.5%	35.8%	2.9%	14.5%
Two or More Races Females	28,468	87.2%	60.9%	11.2%	34.4%
Two or More Races Male	36,106	83.5%	52.7%	7.6%	28.8%
White Females	230,302	90.1%	60.5%	10.9%	34.0%
White Males	246,554	85.3%	49.8%	6.4%	26.6%
Total Females in all Cohorts	954,130	87.4%	56.0%	14.8%	27.5%
Total Males in all Cohorts	1,018,321	80.7%	44.6%	8.4%	21.1%
Male Deficit by Category	N/A	6.7%	11.4%	6.2%	6.4%

Source: California Department of Education
<https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensus/CohRate.aspx?cds=00&agglvl=state&year=2019-20>

¹¹ Compiled from data provided at:
<https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensus/CohRate.aspx?cds=00&agglvl=State&year=2020-21&initrow=&ro=y>